

Tuition tribulations

Many students entering or returning to colleges and universities have probably felt the sting of ever-increasing tuition rates, regardless where they are matriculating. Tuition and fees for undergraduate freshmen at the University of Kentucky this fall are \$3,255 per semester, an increase of more than 60 percent since I was freshman in 2002, when tuition was \$1,987.50.

Sadly, university officials actually contemplating slowing the rate of increase to accommodate students' financial situations is almost as unheard of as them re-ordering spending priorities. It is interesting to peruse a university budget and discover where its money is actually being spent.

Almost half of UK's budget, for example, is spent on its hospital and research undertaken by the faculty. Currently, spending on instruction as a function at UK is projected to consume 13.7 percent of UK's total resources. Add in other services likely to benefit undergraduate students (libraries, academic support, student services, in-



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stitutional support, operations and maintenance, and financial aid), and it all comes to about 40 percent.

The other 60 percent is almost entirely for the hospital, research and public service, valuable to be sure, but at what cost to the average undergraduate student? The primary beneficiaries of those functions are the institution itself, faculty, graduate students such as myself and particular cross-sections of the public at large.

UK's push for "top-20" status illustrates outright exaltation for a funding system that gradually deemphasizes undergraduate education in order to more robustly pursue other objectives.

UK's budget has grown about 33 percent in the last four years, yet administrators never cease talking about the institution's dire financial situation. Sooner or later, citizens won't be able to afford the costs of tuition, which at UK are projected to rise 9 percent annually through 2012. The public will have to decide which benefits of the modern-day university they treasure most.